

Courtesy of your

Employee Assistance Program

1-800-852-3345, Ext. 4336 or 271-4336

Staying Connected to Your Family

Most people agree that their relationships with their spouses and children are what make life satisfying and meaningful. But it's easy to let the demands of a job interfere with these important connections. How can you nurture your connections to your family when you're up to your elbows in reports and household chores? Here are simple guidelines for strengthening the bonds between you and your family members.

SPEND TIME WITH YOUR SPOUSE

In a two-parent family, your relationship with your spouse is the framework for the family structure. Intimacy is what makes this framework strong. Spend at least an hour of private time with your spouse every day, no matter how busy you are with work and parenting responsibilities. Even if you don't have time for romance, this is a good time to talk about feelings and share news of the day.

If you have something difficult to talk about, approach your mate when you're both relaxed. Avoid bringing up challenging situations right when you and your spouse walk in the door after a hard day at work. Respect your spouse's need for personal time, as well as togetherness.

LEARN TO NURTURE YOUR CHILDREN

Children derive their sense of self-esteem from their relationship with their parents. They depend on their parents to set limits for their behavior and to provide good role models for expressing their feelings and behaving in a responsible manner. Healthy communication builds self-esteem. A child who can depend on the consistent, loving attention of a parent feels cared for, important and safe. One of the great joys of parenting is discovering and nurturing your child's personality and passions. Plan time together to find out what makes your child happy. This will also give your child an opportunity to know you better. When you're together, make simple listening and talking a priority. Try to forget about goals – the point of togetherness is to discover and appreciate each other, not necessarily to create the perfect craft project or to skate around the block.

DO THINGS TOGETHER AS A FAMILY

Make the most of family time. Schedule regular family meetings to assign chores and discuss family goals and problems. This is an excellent way to involve children in problem-solving, such as deciding how to spend a summer vacation, figuring out how to keep the living room neater or choosing a weekly dinner menu.

Family fun and leisure activities also keep you connected. Take advantage of leisure time to get to know your children outside the normal time pressures of school and work schedules. Plan family vacations, weekend outings and other recreational activities that everyone can enjoy together. The fun of having a good time together or the thrill of a shared adventure will create family memories you can all enjoy for many years to come.